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Bureau of Indian Affairs Issues Scoping Report

Process for Little River Band of Ottawa Indians' Muskegon County Gaming Project Moves Forward

Washington D.C. — The U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has released a Scoping Report regarding the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians' application for a proposed casino and economic development project at the former Great Lakes Downs racetrack site in Fruitport Township. The Scoping Report outlines the areas to be studied in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the potential environmental consequences of the Little River Band's application for a proposed 60-acre fee-to-trust transfer and casino project.

"This is another big step for the Little River Band and the Muskegon community to bring economic development to the region," said Tribal Ogema Larry Romanelli. "The tribe was encouraged by the large turn out and positive feedback at the public scoping hearing last fall. The community feedback was important to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' ability to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project."

The Scoping Report describes the EIS process, explains the purpose and need for the Proposed Action, describes the Proposed Project and alternatives, and summarizes the issues identified during the scoping process. All comment letters received by the BIA and the public hearing transcript are included in the appendices to the Scoping Report, which is now available on the project website at <http://www.littlerrivereis.com/>

The BIA issued a Notice of Intent on September 21, 2015, which opened a public scoping period to identify potential issues, concerns, and alternatives to be considered in the EIS. There was standing room only at the October 15 public scoping held at the Fruitport Middle School. Representatives from the Fruitport schools, business community, labor organizations and local public officials spoke out supporting the Little River Band's application.

The EIS will take a hard look at the potential environmental impacts of the project, including land use, geology and soils, water resources, agricultural resources, biological resources, cultural resources, traffic, air quality, noise, public health/environmental hazards, hazardous material and waste, public services, and socio-economics.

The Draft EIS and a public comment period are anticipated in Fall 2016. The Little River Band filed an application in February 2015 requesting the BIA to place 60 acres in trust for a \$180 million casino and economic development project. The project is expected to create more than 1,200 new jobs in Muskegon

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County.

Muskegon County is the home to the Little River Band's largest population base. Muskegon is one of the Tribe's service areas and the Tribe maintains governmental offices in Muskegon to serve its members.

"The Tribe has filed an application to place land in trust to develop a casino and economic development project to improve the economic status of our tribal government," said Tribal Council Speaker Virg Johnson. "A Muskegon County casino will enable the Little River Band to better provide housing, health care, education and other services to our elders and youth, particularly those based in Muskegon County."

The Little River Band's proposed gaming and economic development project would include:

- Approximately 69,000 square feet of gaming floor space
- 1,700 slot machines and 35 table games
- 220-room hotel
- Conference and meeting room space
- Dining and entertainment options

The proposed Muskegon casino will play vital role in bringing new jobs and business opportunities as casinos have in other communities including:

- Attracting about 1.88 million visitors annually.
- Create nearly 1,500 jobs, more than 1,000 directly at casino.
- Generate more than \$60 million annually in total wages.
- Approximately \$60 million annually in purchasing for goods and services.
- During construction, generating more than 1,200 local construction jobs.
- Construction workers' income should top \$70 million.

The proposed casino has received wide support from the community including support from Fruitport Township, Fruitport Public Schools, Muskegon County, West Michigan trade unions, The Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and local businesses. Both Fruitport Township and Muskegon County reaffirmed support for the Tribe's Muskegon casino project with resolutions of support in June 2014.

The Little River Band has signed a Municipal Services Agreement with Muskegon County and Fruitport Township that consists of the Tribe making payments for public safety, sanitary sewer, public water construction and other services.

For updates, please visit <http://muskegonjobsnow.org/>

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